

Teaching activities: Winter Olympics

Level:

B2

Skill:

speaking

Interaction:

individual, pairs/small groups

Time:

50'–70'

Materials:

one [sport information card](#) per learner

Learning objective:

By the end of the session, learners will be better able to:

- use persuasive language to present their ideas
- express and justify opinions and come to a decision.

The Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina take place in Italy from 6–22 February 2026. In these activities, learners read about four unusual sports in the Winter Olympics. Collaboratively, they prepare a short presentation to persuade others that their sport should be in the Olympics, then they discuss the four sports to decide which one should be kept.

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Student worksheet
A. Discuss the questions

- What do you know about the Winter Olympics in 2026?
- How many winter sports do you know in English?
- Do you or anyone you know do these sports?
- Why do you think the Winter Olympics is less popular than the summer games?
- What would make people more interested in the Winter Olympics?

B. What are these winter sports? Can you guess what you have to do? (Don't write anything yet.)

It looks like ...	It could/might be ...	I think you have to some sort of ...
			
1.	2.	3.	4.

C. Match the images to the winter sports. Were any of your ideas similar?

Skeleton: Athletes lie head first on a small sled and race down an icy track at very high speeds. They move the sled by adjusting their body weight.

Curling: Teams slide large stones across ice towards a target. Teammates sweep the ice (with brooms) to control the stone's speed and direction.

Biathlon: A mix of cross-country skiing and rifle shooting. Athletes ski fast, then stop at shooting stations to hit targets. Missed shots mean a loss of time.

Bobsleigh: Teams of two or four push a sled (sleigh) to gain speed then jump in and slide down an ice track with steep curves at extremely high speeds.

Breaking news ...

Too many sports in the Winter Olympics – sports to be dropped!

D. Read about the sport on your card. With your group, prepare some key arguments for keeping the sport in the Winter Olympics. Think about:

- why your sport is exciting
- why it is important for the Winter Olympics
- how it is unusual or traditional.

Prepare a one-minute presentation to give to another group saying why your sport should stay in the Winter Olympics. Be ready to answer questions and defend your sport!

Useful language: persuading

This sport is essential/important/unusual because ...	It challenges athletes by ...	Spectators love it because ...	If you drop it, the Olympics will ...
It's one of the most unusual/exciting/entertaining sports ...	No other sport is ...	I strongly believe _____ should stay because ...	There are many reasons why _____ should stay ...

Oracy tip: Try to look at your group (not your card) when you are presenting. This helps you make a connection with your listeners and means they are more likely to listen. As a listener, it shows you are paying attention.

E. With your new group:

- i. **Present** your sport.
- ii. **Listen** to the other presentations and think of questions to ask.
- iii. **Discuss** each sport in turn – try to think of reasons why the other sports should be dropped and justify why your sport should stay.

Useful language: responding to challenges

I understand your point but ... I see what you mean. However, ... That's true up to a point ...

F. Reflection – discuss:

- Which sport was kept in your group? Why?
- Which argument(s) seemed to work best? Why?
- Did you change your mind during the discussion? When and why?
- Were there any arguments you would've used to defend the other sports?

Activity and suggested timing	Notes	Answer key
Lead in, 5' <u>A.</u>	Put learners in groups of two or three to brainstorm and discuss the questions. Monitor and feed in vocabulary they may need later in the lesson, e.g. <i>cross-country/downhill skiing, sleigh/sled, spectators</i> .	
Objectives, 5'	Share the learning objectives with the class explaining what you are going to do. Give learners a couple of minutes to check understanding with their partner then clarify any questions in open class.	
Create interest, 5' <u>B.</u>	Elicit some ideas from the whole class using the phrases: <i>It looks like some sort of skiing sport; I think you have to push a large ball or something.</i> Then in twos or threes, learners discuss what the sports could be. Don't confirm any correct answers at this stage.	
Reading/vocabulary, 5–10' <u>C.</u>	<p>Learners read the descriptions and match them to the icons.</p> <p>Clarify and drill the pronunciation of each sport as necessary. Clarify any unknown vocabulary.</p>	1. bobsleigh /'bɒbsleɪ/ 2. biathlon /baɪ'æθlən/ 3. skeleton /'skelətən/ 4. curling /'kɜːlɪŋ/
Speaking preparation, 10–15' <u>D.</u>	<p>Explain to learners that the Winter Olympics has too many sports and some sports are going to be dropped. They have to choose one sport to keep.</p> <p>Put learners into groups AAAA/BBBB/CCCC/DDDD. Give learners in each group a card for the same sport.</p> <p>Together they read about their sport then prepare to defend it by thinking about the questions. Encourage them to use the useful phrases by thinking of multiple ways to complete them: <i>This sport is important because it started in the 16th century; This sport is essential because there is nothing else like it; It challenges athletes by combining speed and accuracy, etc.</i></p> <p>Learners practise their pitch in pairs. Monitor and provide feedback on the useful phrases, vocabulary they may need, eye contact, etc.</p>	



Activity and suggested timing	Notes	Answer key
	Each learner in the group should be ready to present their sport to another group.	
Speaking, 10–15' <u>E.</u>	<p>Put learners into new groups ABCD/ABCD/ABCD/ABCD.</p> <p>They each present their sport. Remind learners to think of challenging questions while they are listening.</p> <p>Discussion: Elicit some questions learners have thought of to ask, e.g. <i>Why should your sport stay in the Olympics? This sport sounds slow. Why would spectators want to watch it?</i> Then, in their groups, learners ask questions to challenge the other sports. Only one sport can stay (from their group). Remind them they need to justify their answers and opinions and that you'll be listening for this.</p> <p>Encourage them to use the phrases to respond politely to their group's challenges.</p> <p>When learners have discussed each sport, they vote within their group for which sport to keep.</p> <p>Monitor and collect examples of learners using the key language well and justifying their opinions. Also listen for any examples that could be improved to use in feedback.</p> <p>Extra support: Elicit questions plus ideas to challenge the sports (e.g. <i>this sport sounds slow</i>) and write them on the board. Learners can use them during the discussion.</p>	
Feedback, 5–10'	<p>Present the specific examples of feedback to learners (positive and to be improved). Ask them how they could improve them for next time.</p> <p>Optional: After providing feedback, regroup to give learners another chance to practise and improve their presentation and discussions but with a different group.</p>	
Reflection, 5' <u>F.</u>	<p>Put learners into pairs with someone from a different group. They discuss the questions.</p> <p>Collect feedback from the whole group: was one sport more popular overall? Were there similar</p>	

Activity and suggested timing	Notes	Answer key
	reasons/arguments for choosing the successful sport? etc.	

Read more about [developing speaking skills](#).

You can explore further ideas for bringing sport into the classroom in this [blog](#).



Skeleton



What it is

Athletes lie head first on a small sled and race down an icy track at very high speeds. They move the sled by adjusting their body weight.

History

First appeared in the Olympics in 1928, then 1948, and returned permanently in 2002.

Fun fact

The sport is called 'skeleton' because originally the sleds were made of metal and looked like a skeleton.

Why it's entertaining

- Extremely fast and dangerous
- Head-first position makes it unusual and exciting
- Races are won by *tiny* time differences, so each one is tense and exciting

Curling



What it is

Teams slide large stones across ice towards a target. Teammates sweep the ice (with brooms) to control the stone's speed and direction.

History

The sport dates back to the 1500s in Scotland. It became an official Olympic sport in 1998.

Fun fact

Curling stones are made from a very rare type of stone from a small island in Scotland.

Why it's entertaining

- Strategic – often called 'chess on ice'
- Lots of team communication and shouting
- Easy for new viewers to understand the rules and scoring

Biathlon



What it is

A mix of cross-country skiing and rifle shooting. Athletes ski fast, then stop at shooting stations to hit targets. Missed shots mean a loss of time.

History

Based on Scandinavian military training; included in the Winter Olympics since 1960.

Fun fact

Heart rates often rise while skiing, then athletes must suddenly calm their breathing enough to shoot accurately.

Why it's entertaining

- Mix of speed and precision
- Dramatic changes in ranking after shooting rounds
- Shows incredible control and athleticism

Bobsleigh



What it is

Teams of two or four push a sled (sleigh) to gain speed then jump in and slide down an ice track with steep curves at extremely high speeds.

History

Bobsleigh has been in the Winter Olympics since the first Games in 1924.

Fun fact

Modern bobsleighs are often designed by Formula 1 engineers to make sure they are fast and efficient.

Why it's entertaining

- Very fast and dramatic
- Sharp corners make it exciting to watch
- Crashes (although not wanted) add a sense of danger